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Ballad Against Cities

Chi Elliott

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BALLAD AGAINST CITIES

by Chi Elliott

Particularly those of lights.
Popular as the thought of staying,
the act of going.

The farm is down.
The farm is on.

In 1920s Texas
a full third of rent farmers
(150,000 families)
moved each year.
This is not to say they meant to.
Croppers and half-tenants, tenants.
100,000 black troops
had come back from France
to an oddly heightened heat
and a bumper crop.

The farm is keep.
The farm is you.

A set of songs was wondering.
A question big as this field, also
cracking open
in the heat:

How're you gonna keep them
Down on the farm
Once they've seen Gay Paree?

The farm is how.
The farm is them.